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This report is a brief discussion of the case histories of three preschool children who were participants in an Exploratory Study of the Effects of Individual Work on the Functioning of Maladjusted Pre-School Children." This exploratory study was concerned with emotional-social learning and developed the hypothesis that certain desirable activities can be associated with pleasure simply by linking the manifestation of the activity with pleasurable reinforcement. When the linkage is sufficiently well developed, the child can be helped to see the relationship between his pleasure and those activities which provide it. To establish the linkage, preschool children with behavior problems were introduced into a program in which adults observed the child's personality problems and, through reinforcement, attempted to modify the undesirable behavior into desirable behavior. The program was for an hour two times a week for most of a school year. The three case histories of this report include (1) a 3-year-old girl with serious behavior problems and possible retardation, (2) a 3.1/2-year-old boy who had suffered physical deformities and was behind his peers socially and educationally, and (3) a 5-year-old boy who was of normal development physically but came from a poor home environment. Individual goals were set for each child of the study, and it was found that the program did help each child to develop more desirable and self-satisfying behavior. (WD)

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LONG TERM EFFECT OF STRUCTURED TRAINING ON 3 YOUNG CHILDREN

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A paper presented to the California Educational Research Association

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Background:

This study is a continuation of "Exploratory Study of the Effects of Individual Work on the Functioning of Maladjusted Pre-School Children" presented to the California Educational Research Association in Santa Rosa, March 13, 1965. The children on whom this report is given are "Y", "B", and "F" of that study, the basic hypothesis of which was stated as follows.

> "This paper is a report of an exploratory study of the applicability of a three-level theory of learning when used as a framework for emotional-social learning... In exploring the fundamental nature of the creative act the probability emerged that creativity involved the wedding of concept formation with motivation to continue a line of activity, usually with variations. Olds' (1956) work on the pleasure centers of the brain led to the hypothesis that circuits through one of these centers were basic to motivation to continue an activity.
>
> This line of reasoning led to the development of an hypothesis related to emotional-social learning. The thesis is as follows: Certain desirable activities, from the observer's point of view, can be associated with pleasure by linking the manifestation of the activity with pleasurable reinforcement; when the linkage is sufficiently well developed a person can be helped to see the relationship between the pleasure and the kind of activities related to it. With some assistance the person can be freed to look at himself and, hopefully, to see himself as the kind of person who does the sort of things that are emotionally mature and socially desirable. The author was acutely aware of the possibility that as a person is freed to look at himself and to choose consciously a relationship of himself to the world, he may choose undesirable as well as desirable roles. The chosen, conceptualized self-concept will be stable and enduring and difficult to modify from the outside."

The program of activity for the training of the children was outlined in these words.

> "Individual goals were worked out for each of the children. These will be detailed in the case studies. The emphasis on the activities was on making all of the experiences happy ones. Perhaps because of the youth of the children, developmental steps were built slowly and the separation (of adults) into reinforcers and observers proved unnecessary. It was quite possible for the reinforcers to record the interaction as it occurred. The fact that there were frequently two or three children and

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two or three adults operating as a group in an area such as a swing emphasized the opportunities for both observing and reinforcing.

The whole operation turned out to be reinforcing to the children. It was possible to emphasize the reinforcement as a youngster climbed an extra step up a slide, but this was from a general level of encouragement and praise and not from a neutral or hostile "normal" level.

In addition to the swings, slide, and jungle gym of the playground the equipment included a wagon, a tunnel, a folding table and chairs, a picture dictionary and other books, a ball, a doll, a bolt board, plastic colored shapes for building designs, a playschool form board, a bead design set, a block design set, an auditory perception kit, simple jig-saw puzzles, crayons and coloring books. Trips to the beach, wharf, the breakwater, the zoo at the Child's Estate, the Bird Refuge, and the Museum of Natural History were made to expand the children's experiences.

The author picked up the children and drove them to the school. The class met Mondays and Wednesdays from three to four. The youngsters engaged in a variety of activities with a mixture of direction from the adults and freedom of choice by the children setting the stage as to what the sequence and the activities would be. With a one-to-one ratio of teachers to children, great freedom and flexibility were possible."

Case Histories:

In the three case histories that constitute the essence of this report each of the children will be presented as they were a year ago followed in each case by salient developments during the intervening year and an appraisal of the significance of the present status.

Y. "Y is a little girl of three who came immediately to the mind of the social worker as a case that needed help [in social adjustment]. Some quotes from the report of a psychologist who examined her indicate some of her problems about four months before she entered the program.

> 'Y has not learned much self-control. She cried and kicked a great deal. Her speech is a series of garbled mutterings. Occasionally she calls for Daddy, for Mamma, and says, "Go, go."
>
> ...She tore up everything...except the books. These she fondled and was most careful in turning each page...Y is not toilet trained... She easily resorts to tears if she does not get her own way. She had a severe temper tantrum in the office. There is much bizarre behavior ...A quick evaluation with the Vineland Social Maturity Scale was attempted...an age equivalent of 1.3 with a social quotient of 45. Neither score should be taken as more than an indication of Y's current degree of handicap.'

A paragraph from a report to the County Health Department by her pediatrician throws some additional light on her problems.

> 'I saw Y again on 26 December 1964, my last contact with her. Mrs. M. told me that she had been doing well with Dr. Wilson and was doing

somewhat better at home since the administration of the Thorazine syrup. She did, however, still pick on the other children and had a somewhat uncontrollable temper, yawling and screaming. Her speech was very limited...still had her original problems which I suppose could best be interpreted as brain damage with behavior and emotional disturbances associated with her microcephaly. I recommended that she continue her Thorazine and continue the program which had been started with Dr. Wilson.'

In our contacts with Y she has not shown any of the more overt symptoms mentioned in the psychologist's report. This restraint on her part was probably due to a complete lack of pressure on the teacher's part to do anything she would not accept gladly. The problem as far as treatment was concerned was to establish contact with her. She would sit on the swings and could be induced to climb the slide, and she would sit with one of the workers while she read a story although the sitting seemed more important than the story. In the car she sat passively with no apparent interest in the passing world. She did come out of the house to go on the journeys to school with apparent enthusiasm. Her physical coordination seems good. The author contacted the pediatrician to see if the Thorazine could be the cause of her lack of spontaneous activity of an exploratory kind. The pediatrician assured the author that this would not be a likely effect and that in his opinion this was the little girl's natural response to the environment.

During the first two months progress seemed slow although there were increasing signs of pleasure during the sessions and increasing participation in the group activities. These gains were sufficient to be reinforcing to the workers but were not very great.

The report for January 15, which involved a trip to the Bird Refuge to feed the birds that crowd around the people, included these remarks. "Got into car by herself. Ate the food for the birds rather than feeding them. Was a fairly active participator--tended to try to get into water and mud. On the way home sat up and took notice of what was going on to a much greater extent than is normally the case.'

Her alertness and attention to the world around her has been a noticeable factor in her interaction with the world outside herself since that turning point.

In her last session she interacted in the wagon with the three-year-old boy and gave evidences of enjoying the joint venture. She would climb up the slide, actively, to try to reach a small book held above her and she treated the experience as a game. She says a few words but still does not talk.

In an interview with the parents they noted the following changes in Y. 'She is more alert, more understanding, talks a bit, doesn't fight as much with the other kids who get along better with her too.' In answer to a question as to whether they had seen anything that indicated the work with us had been helpful, they said she could now be alone on her own which formerly was impossible, that on a trip to the Bird Refuge she was not

afraid of the birds and fed them which she had not done before and that now she goes to bed by herself on her own initiative. She looks forward to the sessions and runs to meet the author when he comes to pick her up. The parents are convinced that the experience has been very beneficial to her.

The goal set at the beginning for work with Y was to bring her into active contact with the world and to help her develop her speech. In four months work substantial progress seems to have been made in th former but not a great deal in the latter. There are evidences that she accepts herself better than she did previously."

In May as we ended our work with Y it was recommended to the parents that she be enrolled in the Alpha School for mentally retarded children. A conference was held with the director of the school concerning her history and the work we had done with her. She was accepted and started attending in the late fall. On November 12 a Child Development Clinic was conducted by the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles at which Y was one of three cases studied. The following information was recorded.

1. Since leaving our class she had held her own but not made any significant progress.

2. Her SQ on the Vineland Social Maturity Scale was approximately 32.

3. Her development on the Gessel tests ranged from 12-24 months with a mean of 19 months and a score of 33.

4. Her parents found that she still was difficult around the home and that it was almost impossible for them to get baby sitters who could let them get out. She was too difficult for the sitters to handle.

5. Her teacher at the Alpha School reported that she apparently enjoyed her time at the school. She was well behaved, liked to be pushed on the wagon, enjoyed the swings and slides and seemed happy although there was very little evidence that she was learning anything.

Her present status shows little change during the intervening months.

Significance of work with Y.

The positive conditioning in the learning situation seems to have established habits and attitudes that carried over from one school situation to another. There seems to have been an almost complete isolation of this learning to the school situation. The hoped for carry forward to the home and other environments does not seem to have occurred. However, the intensive work over two-thirds of a year did establish desirable habits that functioned in a new but quite similar environment after a break of several months. Since Y was a serious problem emotionally to those with whom she came in contact, and since she now can function--to a limited degree--in a social situation, the intensive training can be considered both desirable and effective. The paradigm should be tested with other M.R. children and with other kinds of learning.

B. "B is a 3½-year-old boy born with severe deformities in both feet; these required almost continual medical and surgical care from his birth until about six months ago. He was fortunate to have a physician who took a personal interest in him through the Crippled Children's Service of the County Health Department and through a similar service while he was in an eastern state. The family life was quite unsatisfactory until he was placed in a foster home at about the time we started working with him. As could be expected his natural mother was concerned about his health and fell into a pattern of behavior that, in effect, kept him a baby and a doll. She has had serious problems in her own adjustment including occasional drinking bouts. The foster parents have four children of their own all of whom are in school. B is accepted by all of the family very well. He is required to try to do things for himself, but the foster father talks to him, teaches him, massages his legs, takes him out to the store, and generally seems to be a very good developmental influence on him. The improvements in B may be much more attributable to the new home environment than to the school sessions although it is probable they have been mutually reinforcing. The goal set for B was to function more efficiently in a physical sense and to learn to talk.

B had only been walking for six weeks when he joined the program. His natural mother accompanied him to the first session and found it difficult to watch him stumble and fall and get rather muddy as he tried to play on the swings. (It had been raining.)

In his first session he would sit on a swing and let go with no apparent awareness of the possibility of falling. He did the same sort of thing as he was assisted to climb up a slide. In early sessions he had a tendency to throw a bit of a temper tantrum if he did not get what he wanted right away.

He has progressed steadily in his physical control and development. In the last session he was running around to climb the steps to the slide and in one instance tried climbing around Y when she was going too slowly for him. He walks and picks himself up when he stumbles which he does rather regularly. He has a considerable vocabulary although he does not talk a great deal. He has a great curiosity about the way things work. He opens the door of the glove compartment of the car and is not above trying to turn the switches and levers. He has been allowed to explore in these directions as far as safety permitted and accepts the prohibitions as these come along.

His foster parents think the school experience has been good for him. They see him as happier and more cooperative as a result of the experience. There is a natural difficulty to disentangle the progress he has made and assign credit to the home and credit to the school. B has come a long way. He is still behind the average child of his age in almost all ways, but he seems to be catching up. If he continues to have a warm reinforcing environment that is, at the same time, demanding performance from him, he should become a useful member of society.

B had another series of operations on his feet and was in a cast from November until the beginning of February. He has continued to live most of the

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time with his foster parents although his natural mother does keep him overnight approximately once a week.

B has developed his speech markedly and enunciates clearly and well. He has learned a considerable number of things by rote including The Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary. He can recite number combinations quite well but without much apparent understanding. His progress has been at least as good as projected. His natural mother has accepted the idea that it is better for him to live with the foster parents than with her."

Significance of work with B.

Most of the credit for the development of B must be given to his foster parents and the developmental care they have given him. The project probably contributed to changing him from a prognosis of probably mentally retarded to probable normal development. The project contributed in the following ways.

1. Support to the foster parents in the things they were doing.

2. Help to the natural mother to see the need to have the child grow up in a different environment than the one she was able to provide.

3. Physical and social development that may have made the activities of the foster parents both more effective and more rewarding for them.

F. "F is a boy who has just turned five. He comes to us from a family of nine children ranging in age from 18 down to a brother two years younger than F. The oldest brother is in a work experience program for MR and has been in difficulties with the juvenile authorities as have the two oldest girls. All except one of the rest of the children have had difficulties in school adjustment. The father, a barber in a non-union shop, wears a hearing aid which he is reported to turn off when things get too noisy for him. The mother is an earnest hardworking woman who has almost no control over the children. The children have a very high record of days absent from school. This characteristic has been in evidence as far as F is concerned but the reason has always been that he had a cold or bronchitis.

The goal set for F was to have him like school and to think of himself as a successful school participant.

He has worked with boltboards, bead designs, jigsaw puzzles, block designs, number boards, coloring books, form boards, and other individual activities as well as playing with the wagon, the tunnel, swings, slide, and jungle gym. From the first he has demonstrated good motor coordination and at least average mental ability. He has also shown himself to be a sensitive child who withdraws into himself at times but also shyly comes out to bask in praise for successes. He has found the contacts with T and M rewarding and stimulating. They have served as a model for him in a number of ways. He tends to be fearful of new experiences. He was concerned as he walked along the breakwater until he found the sea was not unpredictable; he was frightened of the birds at the bird refuge until he found he could chase them and they would run; he was fearful of dogs and even of a puppy that was brought to school. This fear he still has.

He has developed awareness of some social amenities. He now says 'please' and is quite concerned about the well being of the children younger than he is. One day recently he walked around inside the kindergarten room with one of the workers--this has been forbidden territory--and remarked that he would be glad when he could do a number of the things he saw had been done in the room. To a question as to whether he thought he would like to be a teacher when he grew up he replied strongly in the affirmative. It seems as though he is associating the idea of school with desirable and pleasurable things.

In an interview his parents thought that the experience had been very good for F although it was impossible to get a more specific response than that he was always anxious to go even when he had to be kept home because of illness, and the fact that he was trying to get the four-year-old girl next door to come to school with him."

As the project terminated arrangements were made to have F enrolled in a headstart program for the summer. His teacher was briefed about what we had tried to do and of the problems we had encountered. He progressed in a continuation of the pattern he had been following with us. There was too much absence but he continued to grow in confidence. He was fearful of new experiences and it took several weeks for him to become a member of any of the group activities of the children. During this time he was happier in solitary types of activities with the blocks, bolt boards and coloring books which he enjoyed and did well. He entered kindergarten in September. His progress is good except for considerable absence. In November his father died and he has been absent from school most of the time since then. His mother claims that he has bronchitis although this is not a medical diagnosis. He is bright and attractive but the prognosis must be considered poor. The mother is seriously considering moving the family back to Arizona where her relatives are located. If F is to achieve his potential a change will have to be made in the mother's attitude concerning the health of the children and of the importance of school. We were not able to perform this transformation and apparently none of the many other community people--including welfare, county health, church, and school--who have worked with the family have been able to penetrate this orientation.

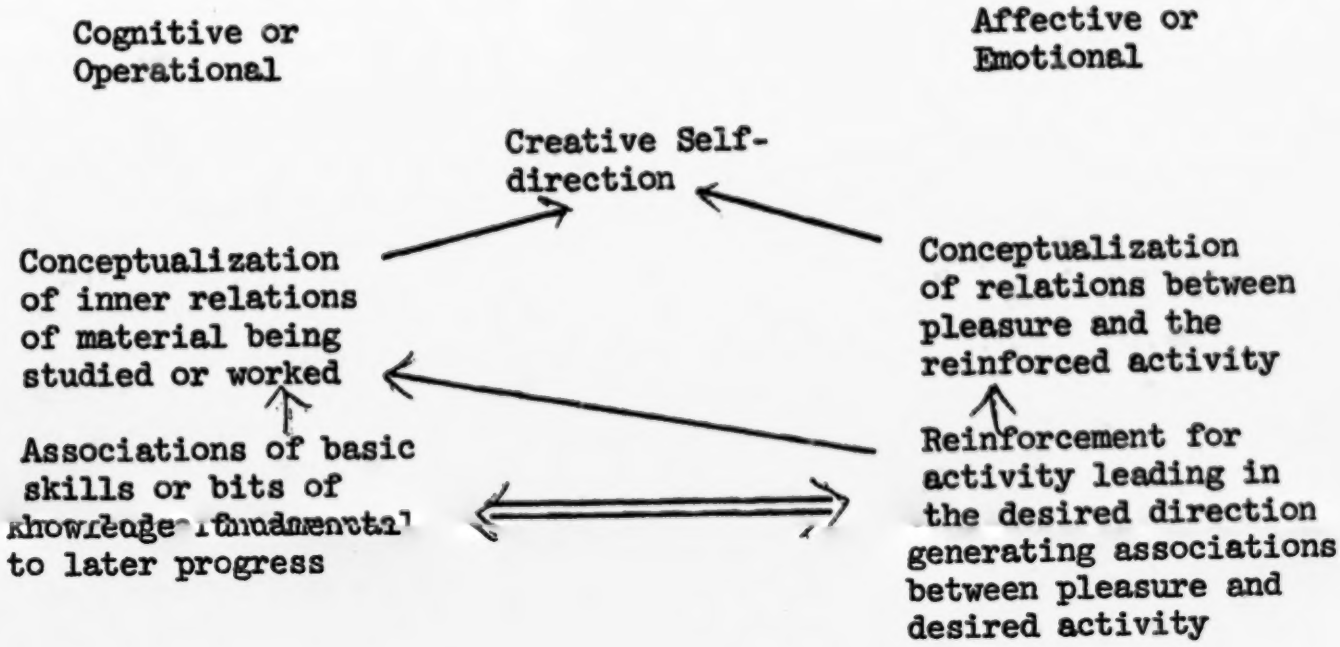
Significance of work with F.

The crucial role of parental orientation is the most significant facet of the work with F. The nine children of this family have very poor school records. Many of their problems are derived from non-attendance at school, a pattern of behavior which seems to be caused by the mother's need to have the children dependent on her. This syndrome has been noted by other workers in other areas but no good system for early identification of the weakness has become generally available. As long as overt neglect or abuse is not present the family system is difficult to penetrate and both society and the children suffer from neglected development of potential. Unless quite important changes are made in F's school attendance he is likely to lose so much schooling that he will develop failure anticipations and patterns of work. At this time we can say he could do well in school but is likely to be a failure. Continued special help --that would probably cost less than future required work by counselors and attendance officers--might make him strong enough to overcome the influence of his mother.

Summary and Conclusions.

The most important results of this study are probably related to changes in the orientation of the research workers. The students all report a greatly increased awareness of the individual differences in children with problems. They claim they will never be able to see young people except as individuals.

For the author the project has led to a realization of the difficulty of many of the problems, to an understanding of unfortunate child-parent relations and the need for treatment, and to a clarification of the nature of motivation as a development in parallel sequence in the cognitive or operational areas and in the affective or emotional areas. The systematic development of both lines from associations, through conceptualizations, to independent self directing people, needs further testing but the lines on which the testing can take place are clearly delineated. This schema may be shown in the model below.


Cognitive or Operational
Affective or Emotional
Creative Self-direction
Conceptualization of inner relations of material being studied or worked
Conceptualization of relations between pleasure and the reinforced activity
Associations of basic skills or bits of knowledge fundamental to later progress
Reinforcement for activity leading in the desired direction generating associations between pleasure and desired activity

Schema for Developing Motivation

The study has also led to knowledge (1) that changes are possible even with severely atypical children, (2) that the costs of changes are likely to be far less than the costs of ignoring the need for change, (3) that the inherent rewards are great for the workers and, (4) that there are some very difficult problems that relate to work with the older generation.